

records to justify the validity of asserted restrictions on delivered data.

(b) The clause at 252.227-7037, Validation of Restrictive Markings on Technical Data requires contractors and their subcontractors at any tier to maintain records sufficient to justify the validity of restrictive markings on technical data delivered or to be delivered under a Government contract.

227.7103-12 Government right to establish conformity of markings.

(a) *Nonconforming markings.* (1) Authorized markings are identified in the clause at 252.227-7013, Rights in Technical Data—Noncommercial Items. All other markings are nonconforming markings. An authorized marking that is not in the form, or differs in substance, from the marking requirements in the clause at 252.227-7013 is also a nonconforming marking.

(2) The correction of nonconforming markings on technical data is not subject to 252.227-7037, Validation of Restrictive Markings on Technical Data. To the extent practicable, the contracting officer should return technical data bearing nonconforming markings to the person who has placed the nonconforming markings on such data to provide that person an opportunity to correct or strike the nonconforming marking at that person's expense. If that person fails to correct the nonconformity and return the corrected data within 60 days following the person's receipt of the data, the contracting officer may correct or strike the nonconformity at that person's expense. When it is impracticable to return technical data for correction, contracting officers may unilaterally correct any nonconforming markings at Government expense. Prior to correction, the data may be used in accordance with the proper restrictive marking.

(b) *Unjustified markings.* (1) An unjustified marking is an authorized marking that does not depict accurately restrictions applicable to the Government's use, modification, reproduction, release, performance, display, or disclosure of the marked technical data. For example, a limited rights legend placed on technical data pertaining to items, components, or processes that were developed under a Govern-

ment contract either exclusively at Government expense or with mixed funding (situations under which the Government obtains unlimited or government purpose rights) is an unjustified marking.

(2) Contracting officers have the right to review and challenge the validity of unjustified markings. However, at any time during performance of a contract and notwithstanding existence of a challenge, the contracting officer and the person who has asserted a restrictive marking may agree that the restrictive marking is not justified. Upon such agreement, the contracting officer may, at his or her election, either—

(i) Strike or correct the unjustified marking at that person's expense; or

(ii) Return the technical data to the person asserting the restriction for correction at that person's expense. If the data are returned and that person fails to correct or strike the unjustified restriction and return the corrected data to the contracting officer within 60 days following receipt of the data, the unjustified marking shall be corrected or stricken at that person's expense.

227.7103-13 Government right to review, verify, challenge and validate asserted restrictions.

(a) *General.* An offeror's assertion(s) of restrictions on the Government's rights to use, modify, reproduce, release, or disclose technical data do not, by themselves, determine the extent of the Government's rights in the technical data. Under 10 U.S.C. 2321, the Government has the right to challenge asserted restrictions when there are reasonable grounds to question the validity of the assertion and continued adherence to the assertion would make it impractical to later procure competitively the item to which the data pertain.

(b) *Pre-award considerations.* The challenge procedures required by 10 U.S.C. 2321 could significantly delay awards under competitive procurements. Therefore, avoid challenging asserted restrictions prior to a competitive contract award unless resolution of the assertion is essential for successful completion of the procurement.

(c) *Challenge and validation.* Contracting officers must have reasonable grounds to challenge the current validity of an asserted restriction. Before issuing a challenge to an asserted restriction, carefully consider all available information pertaining to the assertion. All challenges must be made in accordance with the provisions of the clause at 252.227-7037, Validation of Restrictive Markings on Technical Data.

(1) *Challenge period.* Asserted restrictions should be reviewed before acceptance of technical data deliverable under the contract. Assertions must be challenged within three years after final payment under the contract or three years after delivery of the data, whichever is later. However, restrictive markings may be challenged at any time if the technical data—

(i) Are publicly available without restrictions;

(ii) Have been provided to the United States without restriction; or

(iii) Have been otherwise made available without restriction other than a release or disclosure resulting from the sale, transfer, or other assignment of interest in the technical data to another party or the sale or transfer of some or all of a business entity or its assets to another party.

(2) *Pre-challenge requests for information.* (i) After consideration of the situation described in paragraph (c)(3) of this subsection, contracting officers may request the person asserting a restriction to furnish a written explanation of the facts and supporting documentation for the assertion in sufficient detail to enable the contracting officer to ascertain the basis of the restrictive markings. Additional supporting documentation may be requested when the explanation provided by the person making the assertion does not, in the contracting officer's opinion, establish the validity of the assertion.

(ii) If the person asserting the restriction fails to respond to the contracting officer's request for information or additional supporting documentation, or if the information submitted or any other available information pertaining to the validity of a restrictive marking does not justify the

asserted restriction, a challenge should be considered.

(3) *Transacting matters directly with subcontracts.* The clause at 252.227-7037 obtains the contractor's agreement that the Government may transact matters under the clause directly with a subcontractor, at any tier, without creating or implying privity of contract. Contracting officers should permit a subcontractor or supplier to transact challenge and validation matters directly with the Government when—

(i) A subcontractor's or supplier's business interests in its technical data would be compromised if the data were disclosed to a higher tier contractor;

(ii) There is reason to believe that the contractor will not respond in a timely manner to a challenge and an untimely response would jeopardize a subcontractor's or suppliers right to assert restrictions; or

(iii) Requested to do so by a subcontractor or supplier.

(4) *Challenge notice.* Do not issue a challenge notice unless there are reasonable grounds to question the validity of an assertion. Assertions may be challenged whether or not supporting documentation was requested from the person asserting the restriction. Challenge notices must be in writing and issued to the contractor or, after consideration of the situations described in paragraph (c)(3) of this subsection, the person asserting the restriction. The challenge notice must include the information in paragraph (e) of the clause at 252.227-7037.

(5) *Extension of response time.* The contracting officer, at his or her discretion, may extend the time for response contained in a challenge notice, as appropriate, if the contractor submits a timely written request showing the need for additional time to prepare a response.

(6) *Contracting officer's final decision.* Contracting officers must issue a final decision for each challenged assertion, whether or not the assertion has been justified.

(i) A contracting officer's final decision that an assertion is not justified must be issued as soon as practicable following the failure of the person asserting the restriction to respond to

the contracting officer's challenge within 60 days, or any extension to that time granted by the contracting officer.

(ii) A contracting officer who, following a challenge and response by the person asserting the restriction, determines that an asserted restriction is justified, shall issue a final decision sustaining the validity of the asserted restriction. If the asserted restriction was made subsequent to submission of the contractor's offer, add the asserted restriction to the contract attachment.

(iii) A contracting officer who determine that the validity of an asserted restriction has not been justified shall issue a contracting officer's final decision within the time frames prescribed in 252.227-7037. As provided in paragraph (g) of that clause, the Government is obligated to continue to respect the asserted restrictions through final disposition of any appeal unless the agency head notifies the person asserting the restriction that urgent or compelling circumstances do not permit the Government to continue to respect the asserted restriction.

(7) *Multiple challenges to an asserted restriction.* When more than one contracting officer challenges an asserted restriction, the contracting officer who made the earliest challenge is responsible for coordinating the Government challenges. That contracting officer shall consult with all other contracting officers making challenges, verify that all challenges apply to the same asserted restriction and, after consulting with the contractor, subcontractor, or supplier asserting the restriction, issue a schedule that provides that person a reasonable opportunity to respond to each challenge.

(8) *Validation.* Only a contracting officer's final decision, or actions of an agency board of contract appeals or a court of competent jurisdiction, that sustain the validity of an asserted restriction constitute validation of the asserted restriction.

227.7103-14 Conformity, acceptance, and warranty of technical data.

(a) *Statutory requirements.* 10 U.S.C. 2320—

(1) Provides for the establishment of remedies applicable to technical data

found to be incomplete, inadequate, or not to satisfy the requirements of the contract concerning such data; and

(2) Authorizes agency heads to withhold payments (or exercise such other remedies an agency head considers appropriate) during any period if the contractor does not meet the requirements of the contract pertaining to the delivery of technical data.

(b) *Conformity and acceptance.* (1) Solicitations and contracts requiring the delivery of technical data shall specify the requirements the data must satisfy to be acceptable. Contracting officers, or their authorized representatives, are responsible for determining whether technical data tendered for acceptance conform to the contractual requirements.

(2) The clause at 252.227-7030, Technical Data—Withholding of Payment, provides for withholding up to 10 percent of the contract price pending correction or replacement of the nonconforming technical data or negotiation of an equitable reduction in contract price. The amount subject to withholding may be expressed as a fixed dollar amount or as a percentage of the contract price. In either case, the amount shall be determined giving consideration to the relative value and importance of the data. For example—

(i) When the sole purpose of a contract is to produce the data, the relative value of that data may be considerably higher than the value of data produced under a contract where the production of the data is a secondary objective; or

(ii) When the Government will maintain or repair items, repair and maintenance data may have a considerably higher relative value than data that merely describe the item or provide performance characteristics.

(3) Do not accept technical data that do not conform to the contractual requirements in all respects. Except for nonconforming restrictive markings (see paragraph (b)(4) of this subsection), correction or replacement of nonconforming data or an equitable reduction in contract price when correction or replacement of the nonconforming data is not practicable or is not in the Government's interests,